

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5367

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Early Learning & K-12 Education, February 16, 2017

Title: An act relating to modifying the pupil transportation funding formula to address underfunded school districts that operate pupil transportation efficiently.

Brief Description: Modifying the pupil transportation funding formula to address underfunded school districts that operate pupil transportation efficiently.

Sponsors: Senators Becker, Warnick and Cleveland.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Early Learning & K-12 Education: 2/13/17, 2/16/17 [DP-WM].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) to establish a student transportation allocation adjustment process to address underfunded districts operating student transportation programs efficiently.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & K-12 EDUCATION

Majority Report: Do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Zeiger, Chair; Fain, Vice Chair; Rolfes, Ranking Minority Member; Mullet, Rivers and Warnick.

Staff: Susan Mielke (786-7422)

Background: The Student Transportation Allocation Reporting System (STARS) is used for the distribution of funding for school district student transportation to and from school. STARS uses a regression analysis to calculate each school district's expected cost of providing student transportation services based on the number of students transported and other local district characteristics. A district receives the lesser of their calculated expected costs or their adjusted prior year student transportation expenditures.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The student transportation funding system also provides a comparative efficiency rating system. Each school district is compared to a target district made up of the weighted characteristics of the districts that are most similar. Each district is then compared with their target district to determine the efficiency rating. Districts with an efficiency rating of less than 90 percent must have the regional transportation coordinator at the relevant Educational Service District provide an individual review to determine what measures are available to the school district to improve efficiency.

Summary of Bill: The SPI must establish a transportation allocation adjustment process to address underfunded school districts operating student transportation efficiently. A district is deemed to be operating efficiently if the district's per student transportation cost is less than the statewide average. The allocation adjustment provided may not exceed the amount of funding necessary to bring the district up to the state's student transportation funding average. The state's student transportation funding average is defined as the state funding for student transportation as a percentage of total student transportation costs for school districts.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: PRO: This bill addresses the underlying issues for school districts that are doing a great job operating their student transportation program efficiently but, do to some anomalies, they are not receiving sufficient funding under the regression analysis for the actual cost of the program. There is nothing more "basic" to education than getting students to and from school. There are districts that receive a 100 percent efficiency rating but the district is still subsidizing the student transportation program with local levy funds. Many of the small, rural, and remote school district transportation programs are underfunded because they have circular routes due to a non-gridded road system, which means the bus routes have many dead ends where they have to double-back. Some districts have a lot of back roads and many miles where there are no sidewalks so school districts must transport students to school for safety reasons. Please specifically include funding for public transportation used for the many homeless students that schools must serve under the McKinney-Vento federal law. We would like an amendment to change the methodology used in the bill.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Randi Becker, Prime Sponsor; Dave Larson, Tukwila School District; Jim Kowalkowski, Davenport School District Supt. & Rural Ed Center Director; Jeff Lucas, Eatonville school board; Glenn Gorton, OSPI; Tom Seigel, Bethel School District Superintendent; Lois Davies, Pateros School District Superintendent; Marcia Fromhold, Evergreen School District.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.